

January 16, 2024

To: Matthew Coogan, Town Administrator
From: James B. Riter, Chief of Police
Subject: Police Department Structure

As the Chief of Police, it is my obligation and responsibility to continually monitor current trends and adjust department staffing and practices.

At the present time, hiring and retaining qualified police officers has become one of the biggest challenges in law enforcement. Because of this challenge, police departments locally and nationwide are forced to recruit police officers from other departments instead of the historical practice of promoting candidates that have applied specifically to a department with the hope of a full-time career.

Another challenge to current day policing is the new increases in training police officers and keeping up their certification through continuing education.

The historical model of policing has been that more police officers will decrease criminal activity and reduce the overtime expense for patrol coverage within a police department and budgetary savings to control ever increasing overtime costs. Over the past decades the trends in our community have moved away from property crimes, delinquency activity and domestic violence which would require patrol emergency response for service and have gone to more motor vehicle response and technology-based and targeted police patrol activity. The premise that more police officers cut down overtime may be obsolete. I believe that due to the current pressures on communities for training requirements and staffing this is the perfect time to adjust our model to match current trends.

During my time as Chief I have strived to recruit and hire police officers who have experience in law enforcement as well as those who may have other public and private sector experience and who have shown dedication to the community through their part-time work for the Town.

At the present time I am proud to say we have a solid, dedicated staff who are diverse in their career backgrounds and bring years of experience to the Town in law enforcement and the public and private sectors. The officers are satisfied with the shifts they are currently working and I have no knowledge of any officer wanting to change their career path at this time.

Not having to worry about staffing levels puts the department and the community in a very unique position.

My request is that we place on hold the hiring of a thirteenth officer and reevaluate the need in the FY '27 budget process.

My proposal is to remove the approximately \$79K in salary related items for a thirteenth officer, reallocating some of the funds to help with employee retention and removing the remainder from the police department budget.

1. Currently the Boxford Police Confidential Assistant to the Chief works a permanent part-time position of 28 hours per week. The responsibilities of this position are well above the number of hours allotted.
 - Increasing this position to 33 hours per week will cost roughly \$7,399.66 annually.
2. Move Officer Tammy Broughton from the second patrol step to the top step as of July 1, 2024
 - Officer Broughton has decades of experience in the private sector and prior to entering law enforcement as a career she worked in dispatch both in Georgetown and Boxford.
3. Upon completion of one year of probationary period, move Officer Michael Dougherty to top step.
 - Officer Dougherty came to the Boxford Police Department with a bachelor's degree in finance and a double minor in real estate development and municipal finance. Under the Teamster's contract Officer Dougherty will not receive any education benefit for his education.
 - Furthermore, prior to joining the Boxford PD, he served as Deputy Chief of Staff to Senate Minority Leader, Bruce Tarr. He served nine years on the Town of Ipswich finance committee; two as Deputy Chair and two as Chair. Officer Dougherty left the Ipswich Finance Committee when he was elected to the Select Board for the Town of Ipswich.

The step system within the Teamster's contract was created more for the old model of an inexperienced, entry level police officer joining the police department in their early twenties and working their way up to top step over a period of five years. I believe it is very clear that both Officer Broughton and Officer Dougherty through their life and work experience do not fit in the entry level, 3 and 5 model of their contract.

4. The work inside the police department has changed over the past several decades and the need for detectives skilled in modern police work has also changed. As the Chief of Police, I find the hard work of the Detective invaluable, but unfortunately their value was not recognized in the last round of Teamster's negotiations.
 - I propose an increase in the Detective stipend from \$1200.00 to \$2000.00 for a lead detective, annually for FY '25 and FY '26 budget years.
 - I propose the addition of a Deputy Detective with a stipend of \$1500.00 annually, for FY '25 and FY '26 budget years.

The Detective stipend initially was an agreement between Chief Michael Murphy, Town Administrator Alan Benson and the Select Board. There is no mention of that stipend within the Teamster's contract. It would be my strong recommendation that Town and the Teamsters address this and include it in the next round of contract negotiations. Without some agreement between the Town and the Teamsters, the additional \$800.00 stipend for the Detective and the \$1500.00 stipend for the Deputy Detective are not guaranteed after June 30, 2026, the expiration of the current collective bargaining agreement (sunset clause).

I propose we add \$14,000.00 to the overtime budget divided between Full-time overtime and Reserve pay due to the fact that there will be an increase in overtime for additional patrols on the evening shift when needed.

In closing, out of the approximately \$79,000.00 allocated in the initial draft of the FY '25 Police budget, \$36,000.00 would remain inside the Police budget and \$43,000.00 would be removed from the FY '25 budget. The increases to the proposed budget for FY '25 and FY '26 all have minimizing factors. The increase to the Confidential Assistant to the Chief will end upon an estimated retirement in October of FY '27. Officer Broughton through regular contract salary would hit top step in January of FY '26. Officer Dougherty increase to top step would affect the budget through FY '29. The goal of the increase for Officer Dougherty is to retain him as a long-term employee. If Officer Dougherty did by chance decide to move on, the cost of training an entry-level patrol officer is approximately \$50,000.00. To hire a fully trained patrol officer would most likely require us to offer a top step salary position to recruit that officer away from another agency. Furthermore, Officer Michael Dougherty went through the Bridge Academy Program to become a fully certified police officer in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Officer Dougherty's dedication to the Police Department to become a certified police officer by completing the Bridge Academy and the required 2400 patrol hours saved the Town approximately \$40,000.00 in training expenses.

The increase and the additional Detective stipend have a sunset clause. This only applies to FY '25 and FY '26 and should be included in negotiations between the Town and the Teamster's as an additional section inside their collective bargaining agreement.

The \$14,000.00 added to overtime would be returned to the full-time payroll line item should a thirteenth officer be deemed necessary.

It is my hope that by using this model experiment for the next two years that we will solidify our core group of people for this time frame, show that the Town supports the police officers, hold the department in a good staffing position and allow time for governmental fixes to be put in place with the challenges of cities and towns recruiting police officers. All Massachusetts reserve officers that have not reached certification have until December 31, 2026 to complete the certification process. All officers that are not certified by this date will no longer be allowed to be police officers in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.